“What? Hast smutched thy nose?”:
Medical Discourse in The Winter’s Tale.

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Introduction

This paper discusses the complex imagery of illness and cure evoked primarily by Leontes’s obsessive focus on physicality and by the actions of other characters in related roles in William Shakespeare’s The Winter’s Tale. The subject of Shakespeare and medicine has fascinated a number of critics. For example, Greg W. Bentley has suggested that the image of syphilis works as satire, that involves sexual license, slander, and usury, in Shakespeare and the New Disease: The Dramatic Function of Syphilis in Troilus and Cressida, Measure for Measure, and Timon of Athens (1989). Bentley deals with these four Shakespearean plays, illustrates how syphilis, a new disease in Shakespeare’s time, was an essential artistic component for the dramatist. The study on medical discourse in early modern England and plays continues to be popular today. Jonathan Gil Harris considers how discourses of national mercantilism and pathology interacted in early modern plays in Sick Economies: Drama, Mercantilism, and Disease in Shakespeare’s England (2004). Todd H. J. Pettigrew points out Shakespeare’s skepticism to of the elite and the authority of medicine in Shakespeare and the Practice of Physic: Medical Narratives on the Early Modern English Stage (2007). Emphasizing the importance of “medical practice” rather than “medical knowledge,” Pettigrew looks at the English medical scene, in particular, in the context of the early modern culture and vernacular medical texts. These critics have examined a wide range of early modern plays in terms of their particular interests in medicine; however, Shakespeare’s The Winter’ Tale is in need of further study. Pettigrew, for example, focuses on medical practitioners on stage, but he ignores the character of Camillo who metaphorically functions as medicine.

John Picher, the editor of the Arden Shakespeare 3rd edition, examines the issue of Leontes’s unreasonable jealousy. According to Picher, modern critics and directors are likely to suggest that “Hermionie is too familiar with Polixenes” and tend to miss the point that Leontes does not need any reason to be jealous. Picher argues that “affection”, a brain fever, causes Leontes’s entirely solipsistic conviction. “Affection” in the early modern period
means “irrational behavior, overwhelming passion, lust and animosity” rather than “gentle feeling”. The recognizable physical symptoms are agitation followed by palpitations, feverish sleeplessness and exhaustion, “all of which Leontes experiences” through Act 1 and 2. Hence, \textit{The Winter's Tale} may demonstrate Leontes’s knowledge not from reason but from his imagination caused by affection (Picher 38−41). Notably, in the play there are repeated instances of irrational jealousy and hallucination. When Leontes says to his son, Mamillius “Why, that’s my bawcock: what? Hast smutched thy nose?” (1.2.119−120), the question is raised of just what Leontes “sees” on Mamillius’s nose: whether it is a hallucination or a real symptom of the boy’s illness, a question which is not resolved by the text. Based on Picher’s reading, the section 1 of this paper aims to provide more detailed explanation of the mechanism of Leontes’s hallucination. My discussion considers some hypotheses on this issue: the mark may be taken by Leontes to be a sign of Hermione’s adultery, or the audience may take it to be one of the omens of Leontes’ loss of his family. Or, I would suggest, the mark may be a real, physical sign of miasma, an infectious disease, or nose-bleeding. My interpretation of the latter includes consideration of Lemnius’s \textit{The Touchstone of Complexions} (1576), Thayre’s \textit{A Treatise of the Pestilence} (1603), and Ferrand’s \textit{Erotomania} (1640).

In order to consider the medical discourses regarding the mechanism of hallucination, the second section of this paper deals with occult philosophy. While Leontes exhibits the symptoms of hallucination medically interpreted as melancholy in early modern England, witchcraft was still noted as an art of illusion caused by Satan or witches. In spite of the blurred boundary between science and the supernatural, there was a long dispute between interpretations of melancholy and witchcraft in the reign of King James I. A historical allusion to King James I may be found in the King’s madness in \textit{The Winter's Tale}, a play which was written during James’s reign. My interpretation of Leontes’s characterization is based on the interaction between medicine and occult philosophy, and includes consideration of James’s \textit{Daemonology} (1597), Perkins’s \textit{A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft} (1610), Scot’s \textit{The Discoverie of Witches} (1584), and Shakespeare’s \textit{Macbeth} (1606).

Mamillius’s and/or Leontes’s disease is countered in the second half of the play, especially through the personified curative agents embodied in the characters of Camillo and Paulina. For instance, Florizel praises Camillo as he testifies, “Preserver of my father, now of me, / The medicine of our house” (4.4.566−7). And Paulina appears “with words as medicinal as true” (2.3.36), and she even designates herself as Leontes “loyal servant, your physician” (2.3.53). Thus, in the third section of this paper, it is proposed that these suggestions of cure deployed in the play are significant methods of neutralizing the diseases described in the first half of the play.
Section 1: Leontes’s Hallucination Regarding Miasma, Blood, and Breast-Milk

This section analyses Shakespeare’s use of language to describe Leontes’s hallucination in the first half of The Winter’s Tale, and argues that the fear of adultery imagined by Leontes interacts with the concept of infectious diseases in the medical discourse of early modern England. Thus, it is proposed that the dirt on Mamillius’s nose is a significant element in emphasizing the depth of Leontes’s madness and is also an ominous omen of what is to happen in the play. In this analysis, I refer to some medical sources that examine the miasmic theory, blood, white blood / sperm, and breast-milk. Also I refer to Thomas Nashe’s The Terrors of the Night, Shakespeare’s Macbeth, Othello, and The Merchant of Venice for the purposes of comparison.

Leontes, who has already become deadly jealous, suspects that there is a carnal relationship between his wife, Hermione, and Polixenes. So he asks his son, Mamillius, who his father is:

_Leontes._ ... Art thou my boy?

_Mamillius._ Ay, my good lord.

_Leontes._

I’fecks,

Why, that’s my bawcock: what? Hast smutched thy nose?

They say it is a copy out of mine. Come, captain,

We must be neat – not neat, but cleanly, captain.

[Wipes Mamillius’ face.]

And yet the steer, the heifer and the calf

Are all called neat.

(1.2.120–125, emphasis mine)

Nonchalantly asking his own son about the lineage of his blood, Leontes makes the subtle gesture of wiping dirt from Mamillius’s nose. The editor of the Cambridge edition, for example, explains this act may be a sign of his increasing instability” (Snyder and Curren-Aquino 93). In this sense, actors who play Leontes are likely to demonstrate that Leontes is trying to dispel his suspicion toward his wife’s adultery with this casual act. Furthermore, Leontes repeats several words indicating horned cattle such as “neat”, “steer”, and “heifer”. Saying “not neat, but cleanly”, Leontes corrects himself because he recalls that “neat” means not only clean or trim but also horned cattle (Picher 160). Because of his anxiety toward Hermione’s adultery, thus, Leontes is afraid of being a cuckold. Although he once corrects himself, it seems that he is still obsessed with the image of cuckoldry since he says “And
yet the steer, the heifer and the calf / Are all called neat.” What we should consider here, however, is what exactly makes Leontes choose to do this all of a sudden in identifying that is his hot-tempered excessive jealousy. There might be several interpretations regarding these lines: the smutched nose of Mamillius might be the result of a hallucination Leontes has created in his mind as the sign of his wife’s adultery Or “the dirt” on Mamillius’s nose might be a physical and real sign of the boy’s physical condition. To scrutinize Leontes’s hallucination in more detail, we need to focus on three medical images: infected nostrils, a heated mind, and nose-bleeding as an ominous sign.

First of all, the nose seems to have been recognized as a major indication of adultery as it could be subject to serious infection in Shakespeare’s time. The frequent use of “nose” or “nostrils” in medical metaphor is, for instance, observed frequently in Shakespeare’s The Winter’s Tale and Othello. In these two plays the husbands harshly suffer from disgusting fantasies of their wives’ adultery based on the imagery of olfaction (Iyengar 234–5). Iago has Othello imagine Desdemona’s affair with Cassio, and Othello recognizes which parts of his body needs to be sensible when identifying a the smell of adultery. He says “Nature would not invest herself in such shadowing passion without some instruction. It is not words that shakes me thus...Noses, ears, and lips” (4.1.39–42). Sneaking upon his wife and Cassio and listening attentively to their conversation (the truth is Bianca and Cassio are in the scene), Othello loses himself in wild fancies. He continues “Now he tells how she plucked him to my chamber. O, I see that nose of yours, but not that dog I shall throw it to” (4.1.140–2).

Quite similarly, in The Winter’s Tale, Leontes tries to make his subject, Camillo, understand Hermione’s affair with Polixenes by emphasizing a few parts of the human face including the nose, saying “Is whispering nothing? / Is leaning cheek to cheek? Is meeting noses? / Kissing with inside lip?” (1.2.281–3) Polixenes also has lines focusing on the medical perspective of nostrils as a route for infection. Shocking himself by believing his old friend intends to assassinate him based on the false belief about his adultery with Hermione, the Bohemian king wishes to “Turn then my freshest reputation to / A savour that may strike the dullest nostril / Where I arrive, and my approach be shunned, / Nay, hated too, worse than the great’st infection / That e’er was heard or read” (1.2.415–419). That is, Polixenes vehemently complains that even the “dullest nostril” would scent out the smell of “the great’st infection” if he had committed sinful adultery with the wife of his great friend of long standing. As these examples show, the nose may be the route for the adultery, which is metaphorically represented by serious infection. Moreover, it may be noteworthy that Polixenes uses “nostrils” rather than “nose” in the context of his medical allusion. Selecting the word exactly indicating either of the external openings of the nose, Shakespeare may have underscored the image that citizens can be infected with diseases from the openings. Also, it could be argued that the dirt on Mamillius’s nose becomes a horrible sign of adultery
for Leontes.

This fear evoked by the parallel between adultery and infectious disease seems to be accelerated through a commonly-shared early modern concept known as the miasmatic theory. As Jonathan Gil Harris discusses in *Sick Economies*, the miasmatic or miasmic theory had been noted in a number of medical texts, which debated the process of being infected with the plague. The miasmatic theory explains that people are infected with the plague because miasma or a noxious gas disrupts the balance of the humours (96–7). The first chapter of Thomas Thayre’s *A Treatise of the Pestilence* published in 1603 illustrates with a fine example of medical insight at the beginning of the first chapter:

> This contagious sicknes which is generally called the Plague or Pestilence, is no other thing then a corrupt and venemous aire, deadly enemie vnto the vital spirits: most commonly bringing death and dissolution vnto the body, except with spéede good remedy be vsed. (1, emphasis mine)

Thayre clearly asserts that the poisonous air brings about the plague or pestilence, that is the so-called “black death.” In the early modern period, people were likely to believe that venomous air infected the human body, and the cure for the plague is dealt with in the rest of Thayre’s *Treatise.* Indeed, Shakespeare might have had this theory in mind when he wrote the final act in which Leontes says “Purge all infection from our air whilst you / Do climate here” (5.1.180).

Moreover, his observation of dirt on his son’s nose may betray his strong suspicion concerning the blood relationship between them since he cannot abandon his obsessive thought about Mamillius’s blood relationship with Polixenes. Thus, it is not unreasonable to consider what colour the dirt is. Besides the simplest reading of the dirt as mud or dust due to Mamillius’s playing or participating in sport outside, it could be significant to see it as red: the product of a nose-bleed. In the context of Leontes’s suspicions of adultery between Hermione and Polixenes, the spot’s colour may play a significant role: sperm was medically thought to be a different type of blood in the early modern period. Discussing the internal cause of love melancholy in his representative publication, *Erotomania or a Treatise Discoursing of the Essence, Causes, Symptoms, Prognosticks, and Cure of Love, or Erotique Melancholy* (translated by Edmund Chilmead from the original French version published in 1612), Jacque Ferrand, a French physician born around 1575 in Agen, mentions the close relationship between blood and sperm / seed:

> The Abundance of Blood, of a good temperature, and full of spirits, caused by the continuall Influence of the Heart; by reason that it is the Materiall cause of seed,
is likewise a True Antecedent cause of Love, as it is a passion of the Mind. (64, emphasis mine)

Ferrand says that the active condition of the heart promotes a surplus of blood, which creates the seed of man. Moreover, Ferrand proceeds in his investigation to suggest an alternative color for blood, saying “the seed is nothing else but Blood,” which is “made White by the Naturall Heat” (261). Thus, Ferrand seems to understand that man’s sperm is the result of ejaculation of blood, which is warmed in the natural heat. It may be noticeable if the ambiguity of blood and sperm can be observed in the language of Leontes as well as early modern discourse, when he seems to recognize the double meaning of the humour as he says “To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods” (1.2.109).

The interpretation of “white blood” in The Winter’s Tale may be relevant when it comes to Leontes’s rejection of Hermione as the mother of Mamillius. Being falsely convinced that the queen has a relationship with Polixenes, Leontes spits out at her: “Give me the boy. I am glad you did not nurse him / Through he does bear some signs of me, yet you / Have too much blood in him” (2.1.57−8). John Pitcher in The Jo Shakespeare 3rd edition, reads the line as follows: Leontes means that Mamillius has already inherited Hermione’s blood too much (190). As Pitcher points out, it is noticeable that the importance of blood-line is not likely to be associated with breast-milk feeding in the early modern context. It is the blood-line that Leontes is heavily concerned with in this context, because there is a custom that a wet-nurse feeds an aristocrat’s baby with her breast-milk. So, saying “I am glad you did not nurse him,” Leontes means that he is relieved to have the custom of breast-feeding not from Hermione, who is thought to be adulterous, but from a wet nurse. What is important here is that the word “nurse” implies breast-feeding, which reminds the reader of the white colour of milk, and the liquid was indeed called “white blood” in early modern medical language. The Dutch physician, Levinus Lemnius (1505−1568), defines mammilla as “the receptacles of Milke” and milk as “vvite bloud” in his The Touchstone of Complexions (1576). So, Leontes’s use of “nurse” implies “breast-feeding with white blood” rather than just “giving milk,” and also the image of nursing / breast-feeding with “white blood” makes an intriguing contrast with “too much blood” only three lines below from “nurse.” In Leontes’s distracted mind, therefore, the dirt on Mamilius’s nose may indicate Polixenes’s sperm, or the humour of the Bohemian’s blood-line, or Hermione’s adulterous breast-milk. In this sense, these lines “I am glad you did not nurse him … yet you / Have too much blood in him” (2.1.57−8) can be interpreted as “I am glad you did not feed him with [such white] blood [as milk] …yet you / Have too much [red] blood in him”.

Furthermore, the image of mixing sperm and blood is vividly illustrated in Leontes’s lines when he tries to persuade Camillo to believe in the adultery between Hermione and
Polixenes:

...Sully

The purity and whiteness of my sheets—
Which to preserve is sleep; which being spotted
Is goads, thorns, nettles, tails of wasps—
Give scandal to the blood o’th’ prince, my son,... (1.2.324–8)

Although “sully” is used both physically to illustrate the soiled bed and metaphorically to indicate moral pollution, as Picher also notes too, Leontes believes that real stains are left on the bed as a result of sexual intercourse between Hermione and Polixenes. Notably, the object of Leontes’s imagination quite flexibly shifts from “sheets...which being spotted” to “the blood o’th’ prince [Mamillius].” This goes to show the crucial moment when Leontes’s imagination is impacted by the idea of mixing the image of white sperm and red blood in the course of adultery.

The question of Leontes’s heated mind deserves attention as a significant element to interpreting what the smudge of dirt means more profoundly. In other words, the question is raised of what Leontes thinks he sees in his hallucination. The “Is this a dagger” scene in Macbeth is a strong comparative example of false vision made by a heated mind. Wondering whether he should carry on with the bloody deed of killing his king Duncan, Macbeth, who has been incited by his wife and the weird sisters, sees a peculiar vision and says:

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
Have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain? (2.2.34–40, emphasis mine)

As Macbeth himself recognizes, the floating dagger in front of him is probably imagined only in his “heat-oppressed brain.” This is “the result of fumes” that throws a veil over “his reason” and overheats “the ventricle of fantasy in the brain; or agues and fevers” (Iyengar 163). Leontes in The Winter’s Tale demonstrates similar symptoms to Macbeth, as he finds the conversation between Polixenes and Hermione to be “Too hot, too hot!” (1.2.107) Leontes believes he is witnessing the truth, but what he thinks is true is also distorted in his heat-oppressed brain, causing hallucinations. Like Macbeth, interestingly enough, Leontes
recognizes that his hallucination is infecting him to believe nothing but fantasies to be true.

With what’s unreal thou co-active art,
And fellow’s nothing. Then ’tis very credent.
Thou mayst co-join with something, and thou dost
And that beyond commission, and I find it
And that to the infection of my brains
And hard’ning of my brows. (1.2.140–5, emphasis, mine)

Following Iyengar’s analysis that convincingly connects these hallucinations made in heated brains in Macbeth and The Winter’s Tale, this paper analyzes how this hallucination of Leontes influences his view of the smudge on Mamillius’s nose. If excessive jealousy creates fantasy like a floating dagger in Macbeth’s brain or the wife’s betrayal in Leontes’s mind, the dirt on Mamillius’s nose could also be “what’s unreal.” In this case, olfaction works to recognize his wife’s adultery: that is, a contagious vice from the nose. As I have already indicated at the beginning of this section, therefore, what could be revealed in the scene of wiping dirt on the son’s nose particularly seems to be horrific or sickening view, because the audience might witness Leontes frequently rub his son’s nose, which may be totally clean from the beginning on stage. In other words, Leontes’s phantom dirt as the symbol of his suspicion of his wife’s adultery is, as it were, Macbeth’s phantom dagger as the symbol of his dark ambition to usurp the Scottish kingdom.⁶

Considering the dirty smudge on Mamillius’ nose as red blood may lead to another interpretation: nose-bleeding as an ominous physical sign. Although I suggested that there could be a horrific interpretation that Leontes frequently rubs his son’s nose, which may be totally clean, what if Mamillius’s nose actually bleeds? This view may be more uncanny because Leontes sees his son’s nose-bleeding, rubs the nose, and continues his monologue about his wife’s adultery as if nothing is happening to his son’s health at all, never mentioning the nose-bleeding again. It is to be noted that Elizabethans traditionally assumed that nose-bleeding foretells a bad outcome. In The Merchant of Venice, Lancelot Gobbo, the Clown, refers to Black Monday in relation to nose-bleeding before Shylock goes out for dinner with Christians:

And they have conspired together. I will not say you shall see a masque, but, if you do, then it was not for nothing that my nose fell a-bleeding, on Black Monday last, at six o’clock i’th morning, falling out that year on Ash Wednesday was four year in th’afternoon. (2.5.21–26, emphasis mine)
Lancelot here indicates the festive event of the night, revealing more than he intends to say; for example, by wrongly uttering “conspired together” in describing Christian attitudes, he says “reproach” instead of “approach” two lines above. As such uncanny malapropism implies, Lancelot’s language succeeds in parodying Shylock’s anxiety on a night of Christian festivity (Drakakis 252, Halio 143). The most distinctive element is his report regarding his “nose fell a-bleeding, on Black Monday” because, first of all, on the day, April 14th, was noted at the time as the day in 1360 on which King Edward’s army was frozen to death because of the dark, misty, and arctic weather. The ominous implication of ill fortune, then, resonates when it comes to remembering what words are exchanged before the lines:

Shylock.

There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest,
For I did dream of money-bags tonight.
Lancelot.
I beseech you, sir, go: my young master doth expect your reproach.

(2.5.17−20, emphasis mine)

Shylock reports that he had a dream about his money-bags last night, followed by Lancelot’s response with bitter malapropism: “my young master [Bassanio] doth expect your reproach.” Here by chance implies that Christians welcome the Jew, which may remind the audience of Macbeth’s line “what the false heart doth know” (1.7.83). The superstition that dreaming money was thought to be an omen, the sound and meaning of “ill a-brewing” noticeably acts in concert with “fell a bleeding” two lines below.

In his note on this “nose fell a bleeding,” John Drakakis, the editor of Arden Shakespeare 3rd edition, refers to Thomas Nashe’s The Terror of the Night, or a Discourse of Apparitions (1594), which is a compiled book of collected folklore tales regarding dreams and illusions. Nashe writes “If he chance to kill a spider, he hath suppressed an enemie; if a spinner creepe vppon him, hee shall have golde raine down from heauen: if his nose bleede, some of his kinsfolks is dead” (Nashe 222). It is quite understandable that this quotation from Nashe is referred to clearly because of the discourse about nose-bleeding’s ominous sign of familial death; however, there should be two points more to note about the connection with The Winter’s Tale. First, killing a spider is interpreted as a charm to tell the successful suppression toward an enemy, which is apparently connected to Leontes’s knowledge of spiders. The Sicilian King believes that:

...There may be in the cup
A spider steeped, and one may drink, depart,
And yet partake no venom, for his knowledge  
is not infected; but if one present  
Th’abhorr’d ingredient to his eye, make known  
How he has drunk, he cracks his gorge, his sides,  
With violent hefts. (2.1.39–45, emphasis mine)

Leontes explains the folklore belief that a person who does not see a spider in his cup will not be poisoned because his knowledge “is not infected,” whereas another is so poisoned that he vomits and empties his chest or guts with violent heaving because something horrible “enters” his eye and stimulates his brain’s imagination. So the spider, as long as it is witnessed, functions as an ominous sign in the Shakespearean context as well as Nashe’s text that failing to kill the spider, or liquidating the spider, implies the failure of one’s intention to suppress an enemy.

The subtle point of the ominous dirt on Mamillius’s nose provides the reader with a new perspective on the well-known premise that Mamillius’s reference to “one [tale] / Of sprites and goblins” (2.1.25–26) is a previous notice of the explosive conflict among the king’s family. Anne Barton, for example, points out how the reference to “sprites and goblins” triggers the harmful night, or “adult phantasy,” tale created by Leontes, suggesting the beginning of the late plays as the end of comedies (Barton 161–166). The nose bleeding foretells the conflict before Mamillius asks his mother to hear ghost stories from him. Hence, as Shylock overlooks significant clues in such words as “reproach,” “masque,” and “nose-bleeding” behind Lancelot’s smoke screen of language (Halio 143), and fails to keep Jessica in his house, Leontes overlooks an ominous sign in Mamillius’s nose-bleeding by incessantly paying too much attention to the “smoke screen” of his hallucination: Polixenes and Hermione who “called [each other] neat” or virginal “Upon her palm” (1.2.125–6).

All in all, the smutched nose of Mamillius might be a hallucination Leontes sees in his mind as the sign of his wife’s adultery and the possibility of Mamillius’s bastardy, routed from the blood-line from Polixenes. However, such a hallucination could demonstrate the variety of “dirt.” For Leontes’s distracted mind, it can be viewed as Polixenes’s sperm, or the humour of the Bohemian’s blood-line, or Hermione’s adulterous breast-milk. In Leontes’s understanding of these hallucinations, these multiple body fluids illustrate the infectious route from Polixenes to Mamillius through Hermione’s body. Or if Mamillius’s nose actually bleeds, it also functions as an ominous and medical symptom to foretell the loss of family, in spite of the uncanny ignorance of Leontes.

In this section, I have referred to some of early modern materials concerning medicine such as miasmic theory, blood, white blood / sperm, and breast-milk. In addition, I referred to Thomas Nashe’s *The Terrors of the Night*, Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *The
Merchant of Venice for comparison. Through cross-readings of these materials, this section has discussed Shakespeare’s use of language to vividly illustrate Leontes’s hallucination in The Winter’s Tale. Thus, the fear of adultery is elaborated by the concept of infectious disease along with the medical discourse in early modern England. Although the dirt on Mamillius’s nose has been thought to be a minor element compared with sound-and-fury monologue by Leontes, the line “What? Hast smutched thy nose?” should be treated more significantly as a sign of Leontes’s madness and an ominous future in the first half of the play. Yet, it would be difficult to discuss Leontes’s madness only from the medical point of view, since in the early modern period the medical discourse on hallucination cannot be considered independently of certain political and occult issues, especially that of witchcraft.

Section 2: Leontes’s Melancholic Projection of Witchcraft

In order to examine the mechanism of Leontes’s hallucination, section 1 has introduced the relationship between the miasma theory and nostrils in the context of the early modern medicine. Although the section supports John Picher’s suggestive reading of the term “affection” in the play, it remains to be seen why Leontes’s accusation is kept so intensely till the end of the trial of which his hallucination takes the concrete form of accusation. I would like to suggest that melancholy and witchcraft should be another possible answer to the question in the context of the early modern medicine. This section explores how medical discourses and witchcraft discourses interact, and claims that Leontes’s melancholic projection of witchcraft is a significant element of his characterization. Thus, it is revealed that The Winter’s Tale is a play created in the vortex of a unique dispute between melancholy and witchcraft from late 16th to early 17th century. For this analysis, starting from Nashe’s The Terrors of the Night, I would like to consider occult materials written by King James I and William Perkins, medical materials written by Reginald Scot, and above all, Shakespeare’s Macbeth.

Thomas Nashe’s The Terrors of the Night not only informs us of the connection between awareness of the presence of a spider and “immediate misfortune” (Nashe 222), as I discussed in section 1, but also considers the folklore of witchcraft on the same page, as follows:

The first witch was Proserpine, and she dwelt half in heaven and half in hell; half-witches are they that pretending any religion, meddle half with God and half with the devil. Meddling with the devil I call it, when ceremonies are observed which have no ground from divinity. In another kind, witches may be said to meddle half with GOD and half with the Devil, because in their exorcisms, they use half
The discourse of ominous signs connects the folklore of Proserpine, who is defined as the first witch or “half with GOD and half with the devil.” It is not unreasonable that this reminds us of the black spell of Lady Macbeth, calling on “spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex” herself (1.5.39–40). Subsequently, Lady Macbeth commands these spirits to “Come to my woman’s breasts / And take my milk for gall” (1.5.46–47). Her desire of cherishing ambition accelerates her rhetoric of accomplishing the bloody deed, even killing her own imagined and spotless child. When her husband shrinks from carrying out the assassination of King Duncan because the king “hath honoured me of late, and I have bought / Golden opinions from all sorts of people” (1.7.32–33), she demonstrates her strong will by describing her nursing a baby and saying she would have “plucked my nipple from his boneless gums / And dashed the brains out” (1.7.57–58).

The question, regarding The Winter’s Tale, is whether it is coincidental that Leontes makes use of the same rhetoric when he utters his antipathy to the baby Perdita, by saying “The bastard brains with these my proper hand / shall I dash out” (2.3.138–139)? If not, examining the study of the discourse of witchcraft might help bridge between The Winter’s Tale and Macbeth. It seems at least reasonable that Lady Macbeth uses witch-like language because of her ambition and manipulation for the assassination; however, there must be some detailed interpretation in the case of Leontes. Thus, the contemporary dispute between witchcraft and melancholy would be of significance.

There was a major controversy in ideas concerning witchcraft and melancholy during the reign of King James I. Some argued witchcraft existed and influenced human beings while the others believed what was thought to be witchcraft was the mere result of an excessive humour such as melancholy. Intriguingly enough, even among those who regarded witchcraft as reality, the relationship between the unbalanced humours and witchcraft was emphasized. Take for example William Perkins, in his A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft (1610) argues that “An illusion is a worke of Satan, whereby he deludeth or deceiueth man.” Consequently, he emphasizes how the devil makes people’s humour unbalanced, affecting their vision: “This the deuil can easily doe diuers waies, euen by the strength of nature. For instance, by corrupting the instruments of sense, as the humour of the eye, &c. or by altering and changing the ayre” (23–24). Perkins claims the existence of the witch as an agent who “corrupts” human senses. Combining the discourse of humours and witchcraft, he insisted on a harsh persecution for all witches. Tracing back to 26 years prior to Perkins’s argument, Reginald Scot, an English country gentleman, debated that what people think is witchcraft, and stated that it must be caused by excessive melancholy as his The Discoverie of Witchcraft (1584) says:
If any man advisedly mark their words, actions, cogitations, and gestures, he shall perceive that melancholy abounding in their head, and occupying their brain, hath deprived, or rather deprived their judgements and all their senses: I mean not of cousening witches, but of poor melancholick women which are themselves deceived. (30, emphasis mine)

Scot here introduces melancholy, which occupies people’s brains, as a scientific warrant to vindicate those people who are thought to be witches. His medical argument about melancholy provoked suspicion toward witchcraft in the whole of early modern England (Clark 141); however, his report at the same time helped to emphasize the stereotype of poor and old melancholic women. Indeed, in the circulation of witch-hunt discourse in early modern England, women were thought to be more deviant than men as women were considered to be sexually unstable, descending from the original woman, Eve in the Garden of Eden (Hester 296), and the main female characters in The Winter’s Tale—Hermione, Paulina, and Perdita—are, in several ways, accused of having influence similar to witchcraft. Leontes punishes his female family because in Leontes’s false understanding, Hermione indicates her sexual deviance with Polixenes. Paulina is defined as “A mankind witch” (2.3.66) for her rebellious attitude toward the patriarchal hierarchy represented by Antigonus, her husband, and Leontes, her king. Perdita is called “...thou, fresh piece / Of excellent witchcraft” (4.4.420) by Polixenes. In this way, Shakespeare repeats the imagery of witchcraft by way of his female characters in The Winter’s Tale. Interestingly enough, these female characters are free from the stereotype of witches such as “old, poor melancholic women.” In addition, of course, these accusations of witchcraft are evoked from Leontes’s melancholic false hallucination or from Polixenes’s impatient and offensive emotion (although this is understandable as the typical anxiety about marriage between the prince and a shepherd’s daughter).

The female characters, who are “deviant” from stereotypical witch representations, may be evidence of Shakespeare’s flexibility in absorbing both medical and witchcraft discourses of his time in illustrating the confused nature of Leontes. In The Winter’s Tale, those who are accused of witchcraft are brave, truthful, and innocent, while these agents’ accusations are, particularly in the case of Leontes, false and disturbed. Stephan Greenblatt, in his discussion of witchcraft allusion in Macbeth in Shakespeare Bewitched (1993), criticizes Scot for his narrow point of view in several ways:

The phantasmagorical horror of witchcraft, ridiculed by Scot, is redistributed by Shakespeare across the field of the play, shaping the representation of the state, of marriage, and, above all, of the psyche...If I were a woman on trial for witchcraft,
I would call upon Reginald Scot, misogynic, narrow-minded, suspicious of the imagination, to testify on my behalf, not upon Shakespeare. Macbeth leaves the weird sisters unpunished, but managed to implicate them in a monstrous threat to the fabric of civilized life. (125, emphasis mine)

Criticizing Scot as “misogynic, narrow-minded, suspicious of the imagination,” Greenblatt highly evaluates Shakespeare’s “redistribution” of “The phantasmagorical horror of witchcraft, ridiculed by Scot.” Hence, in his writing process of Macbeth, Shakespeare’s flexibility helps the dramatist avoid simple inequity of describing witchcraft or melancholic women. And it is remarkable that the argument of Greenblatt can be further applied in the analysis of Shakespeare’s late plays including The Winter’s Tale, firstly because these female characters are not easily categorized into the stereotypical type of witch, and secondly because the authorized position of the king is relativized and criticized for his evident but false judgments under the influence of both early modern medical and witchcraft discourse.

Leontes seems to be the most prominent excellent example of a twisted character derived from a unique mixture of medicine and witchcraft in the possible allusion to King James I and his attitude toward witchcraft. In “The Preface to the Reader” of his Daemonology (1597), James clearly explains the reason why he wrote the book. According to what he has to say, there is “the fearfull abounding at this time in this countrie, of these detestable slaues of the Deuill, the Witches or enchaunters,” and he picks up two advocators who state “the damnable opinions.” One of the two advocators is an Englishman, Reginald Scot, who “is not ashamed in publike print to deny, that there can be such a thing as witch-craft” (James I 2). In spite of the urgent claim by the King of England, in reality, British citizens had been suspicious about witchcraft in late 16th century. As Stephen Orgel says, in his introduction to the Oxford edition of The Winter’s Tale, King James’s belief or general attitudes toward witchcraft in Daemonology indicate his regression from late Elizabethan attitudes. The frequency of legal actions, Orgel continues, had drastically diminished since 1585, and few records of witch-trials are found in the early 17th century. The Winter’s Tale is still likely to demonstrate an intriguing boundary between the reality and fantasy. Orgel stresses that the less often English citizens sued their neighbors as witches the more Jacobean dramatists dealt with magic or witches on stage. To cite some instances, Shakespeare created Macbeth, Pericles, and Tempest; Ben Jonson made the Alchemist, Devil is an Ass and others (Orgel 58–61), and The Winter’s Tale was written at this exact time, dealing with witchcraft / magic. Thus, Leontes sues Hermione in the court, shouting “Commit them to the fire” (2.3.94) to Paulina and baby Perdita, as if a persecutory judge pronouncing sentence on women accused as witches in a trial. In this sense, there might be a parallel between King Leontes, who treats women as witches, and King James I, who supported the witch-hunts. This possible
allusion raises the question of why King Leontes uses bloody rhetoric such as “The bastard brains with these my proper hands / Shall I dash out” (2.3.138–9), which could be freshly remembered as echoing Lady Macbeth’s language of witchcraft?

Moreover, it is noticeable that the agent of witchcraft accusation uses language familiar from witchcraft discourse. The allusion to King James I in *The Winter’s Tale* might be derived from the accusation at the trial of his mother, Mary Queen of Scots. John Pitcher introduces a drawing of the trial of Mary Queen of Scots, done in 1587, around the time of Mary’s trial and execution, although he does not deal with the discourse of witchcraft in his introduction for the Arden edition of *The Winter’s Tale*. According to Pitcher’s note on the drawing, “in 1612, around the date of *The Winter’s Tale*, Mary’s son James I had her remains exhumed and reinterred in Westminster Abbey, beneath a marble effigy and tomb.” In terms of the contemporary audience’s point of view, Pitcher continues, they “may have recognized parallels between Hermione’s trial and Mary’s, and the statue and the effigy” (Pitcher 67). What should be considered here, I believe, is not only the parallel between Hermione and Mary but also that between Leontes and James. If there could be such a parallel between the King of Sicily in fiction and the contemporary King of England in reality, Leontes’s accusation against Hermione may represent James’s complex mentality and political position. In reality, James, whose mother was once accused of treason and treated like a witch, authorized his *Daemonology*, supporting the basis of believing in the existence of witchcraft and persecuting witches. In other words, King James I, consciously or unconsciously, was persecutor (of witchcraft) and the persecuted (as for his mother). This is exactly what is interesting about *The Winter’s Tale* too, since James’s illogical state of mind seems to be reflected in Leontes’s / Shakespeare’s illogical use of language: showing his strong will to destroy the baby Perdita, Leontes utters “The bastard brains with these my proper hands / Shall I dash out” (2.3.136–9). Thus, this line may have reminded the contemporary audience of the lines of Lady Macbeth, represented Shakespearean character of the bewitched.

Surprisingly enough, both Leontes and Lady Macbeth use the particular phrase of “dashing out the child’s brain” to indicate their firmness of belief. Relentlessly encouraging Macbeth to assassinate King Duncan, Lady Macbeth indicates her solid will to carry out the bloodiest deed all mothers would reject:

> I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
> Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums  
> And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn  
> As you have done to this. (1.7.56–9, emphasis mine)

Again, the question is: why does Leontes use this “bewitched” language, particularly almost
the same as “unsexed” and “bewitched” Lady Macbeth? I would answer this question by claiming that Leontes as a persecutor of witches is so obsessed with his target that he has contracted the infectious image of witches in his mind, and utters the bewitched language inadvertently and ironically. Therefore, it could be said that Shakespeare succeeds in expressing the fear that the persecutor and the persecuted become two sides of the same coin, by making Leontes repeat Lady Macbeth’s bewitched expression, just as King James, who once showed his sympathy toward the persecuted Queen Mary, wrote Daemonology from the persecutor’s point of view. In this sense, Shakespeare anticipated the phrase of Friedrich Nietzsche: “He who fights with monsters should be careful lest he thereby become a monster. And if thou gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will also gaze into thee” (Niche 63).

Thus, Shakespeare describes the blind attitude of Leontes by subtly providing an extreme mediation between the King and witchcraft-like language. We could understand this ironical phenomenon when considering the history of accusation and violence: the agent of criticism can be criticized by his own critical point of view. Shakespeare’s writing becomes effective when dealing with this phenomenon. Take, for example, The Merchant of Venice, which demonstrates this phenomenon through the conflict between Jew and Christian. The Christians represented by Antonio, Bassanio, Gratiano, and Portia could be criticized for their own concurrence on the relentless punishment on Shylock, because their agreement seems to be against their previous persecution under the name of “mercy.” When Gratiano shouts “Thy currish spirit / Governed a wolf, who hanged for human slaughter...for thy desires / Are wolvish, bloody, starved and ravenous” (4.1.132–7), the audience may have found it dreary or empty, because he permits himself to behave like an unappeasable animal such as the bloody “wolf” and “ravens.” To know the agent of accusation unconsciously follows their own projection of “the others.” Shakespeare becomes radical in The Winter’s Tale in another way as he applies this cynical phenomenon to the language of Leontes.

In this section, I have considered King James I and William Perkins and their occult writings. Also, I have referred to Reginald Scot’s medical writing, and Shakespeare’s Macbeth as appropriate references to scrutinize witchcraft allusions in The Winter’s Tale, a play written in the vortex of a dispute between medical discourse, and its representations of melancholy, and occult philosophy, represented by witchcraft, from the late 16th to the early 17th century. Consequently, I have explored the way in which medical discourses and witchcraft discourses intercommunicate, and argued that Shakespeare may have referred to the distorted relationship between the King James I’s individual attitudes toward the trial of Queen Mary and his official publication of Daemonology, when the playwright demonstrates Leontes’s melancholic projection of witchcraft. Therefore, it can be suggested that melancholy and witchcraft is another key to consider the question about the way in which Leontes’s unreasonable accusation toward Hermionie becomes plausible for the early
modern audience. In other words, the analogical implication between Leontes’s melancholic hallucination of Hermione’s adultery and King James I’s actions may be one of the key concepts to explain the trial scene as the concrete form of his violent denunciation. In section 1 and 2, I focused on Leontes’s madness created from medical and witchcraft discourses in the first half of *The Winter's Tale*. Therefore, how could such first half, which is structured as a tragedy, be resolved in the latter half of the play?

Section 3: Camillo and Paulina: Loyal Subjects as Personified Cure

In the structure of *The Winter's Tale*, in particular in accord with the pattern of Shakespeare’s late plays, the main characters are provided with a form of salvation towards the end. Hermione is restored to Leontes through the agency of Paulina, and he also renews the bond with Polixenes thanks to Camillo, who manages the marriage negotiation between the Bohemian prince Florizel and the Sicilian princess Perdita. Thus, Leontes is convinced that “The blessed gods / Purge all infection from our air” (5.1.180) as if he clearly sees “the fog and filthy air,” through which weird sisters hover in *Macbeth* (1.1.11−2), for example, has all been cleared. What should not be dismissed here in the play’s melodramatic denouement is that Shakespeare has carefully deployed elements of medical imagery, not only illness but also cure from the beginning to the end as if replying to the tragic echo of infectious disease and witchcraft. This section, finally, examines the aspect of cure in *The Winter's Tale* by paying attention to Camillo and Paulina, and argues that these two characters work as a personified medicine in Shakespeare’s way of writing.

*The Winter's Tale* begins with a conversation between Archidamus, the Bohemian, and Camillo, the Sicilian. The characters are earnestly promoting friendly relations in this opening. Replying to Archidamus, who praises Mamillius as the destined successor of Sicilian kingdom, Camillo illustrates how the son of the Sicilian King is significant to the nation. As he says, “...It is a gallant child, one that indeed physics the subject, makes old heart fresh” (1.2.32−3). Camillo’s use of “physics” in these lines is a notable example of medical allusion, and of cure in particular. More characteristically and metaphorically, the character is described as a medicine or a doctor. And the idea of cure, which is personified as a living character in Act 1 Scene 1, acts in concert with another personification of medicine in Act 4 Scene 4 where Florizel speaks “But O, that thorns we stand upon! Camillo, / Preserver of my father, now of me, / The medicine of our house” (4.4.565−7). Praising Camillo, who suggests that Florizel should go to Sicily, the prince of Bohemia clearly stipulates Camillo as a medical element to cure the royal bond in the Sicilian kingdom. Even at the beginning of the play, Camillo has the role of saving some characters from a deadly fate as he enables Polixenes to escape from Leontes’s assassination plot. Also, he shows his loyalty as the
king’s subject even by remonstrating with Leontes. In this sense, it could be claimed that his praise for Mamillius in a medical allusion at the beginning of the play eventually serves to construct himself as the cure for illness and corruption at the end of the play.

The medical importance of Camillo can be also emphasized through his loyal attitude toward Leontes. His word use of “thee,” for instance, demonstrates his virtue as a courtier in Act 1, where Leontes believes blindly in Hermione’s adultery with Polixenes. Showing his loyalty to his queen “so sovereignly being honourable,” Camillo audaciously says to the deranged King, “I have loved thee” (1.2.320–1). Since it is irregular to use “thee” in address from a subject like Camillo to a king like Leontes, some editors such as Theobald have emended this half line to the next line uttered by Leontes. In King Lear, however, Kent uses “thou” to Lear in the crucial situation that the king mistreats Cordelia (1.1.156–80), and such a word choice as “thou” functions to show the character’s resolution as a true and loyal subject (Orgel 104). Hence, Camillo works as a personified medicine to the loyal bond and peace in The Winter’s Tale.

Also, it is evident that Shakespeare’s choices of language makes Paulina have the role of wise woman personified from medicine. When Hermione is confined in prison, she appears and boldly states her position in metaphorical language: she does “come with words as medicinal as true, / Honest as either, to purge him of that humour / That presses him from sleep” (2.3.36–8). She is not afraid to emphasize that she “professes / Myself your loyal servant, your physician, / your most obedient counselor” (2.3.52–4). Her position as a “physician” who has “medicinal” words is understandable due not only to her straightforward expostulation but also her sharp diagnosis of Leontes’s sleeplessness. As Pitcher again notes on Leontes’s confession of his belief in sullied “purity and whiteness of my sheets / Which to preserve is sleep” (1.2.324–8). Leontes is convinced that he can sleep in peace but once the bed has been used for adultery he would never be able to sleep in tranquility. In short, sleep usually is not restorative in The Winter’s Tale (Pitcher 177).

In order to measure how critical the Leontes’s symptom of sleepless are in Shakespeare’s use of language and imagination, Macbeth again provides a vivid reference. When Macbeth assassinates King Duncan, the fear of sleeplessness echoes in his mind: “Sleep no more; / Macbeth does murder sleep, the innocent sleep, / Sleep that knits up the raveled sleave of care” (2.2.34–36). Tormented by his bloody deed and obsessed by the fact that “Banquo and his Fleance lives,” he eventually cries “O, full of scorpions is my mind” (3.2.39–40), which apparently reminds us of Leontes’s rhetoric of insects with poisonous stings in his imagination, crying “my sheets / ...being spotted / Is goads, thorns, nettles, tails of wasps—” (1.2.325–7). Therefore, as if in response evidently, Paulina in The Winter’s Tale, clearly states the reason why she appears: “I come to bring him [Leontes] sleep. ‘Tis such as you, / That creep like shadows by him and do sigh / At each his needless heavings”
(2.3.32-4). And she even designates herself as Leontes “loyal servant, your physician” (2.3.53). So, it could be claimed that the diagnosis and attempt to cure deployed in the play are the significant indications of neutralizing of the diseases described in the first half of the play.

Some of Shakespeare’s late plays are likely to show a medical personification of particular characters to be a powerful and influential feature, whereas others tend to provide an incapability of doctors or medicine. The doctor in Macbeth is one of the typical examples of powerlessness in Shakespearean characters called doctor or physician in his plays except for the late plays. When he witnesses Lady Macbeth’s sleep-walking, the doctor concludes to give up and just observe “the patient” as she is, because “This disease is beyond my practice. Yet I have known those which have walked in their sleep who have died holily in their beds” (5.1.56-8). In addition, the line drawn between disease and the “patient” is relatively distinctive prior to the late plays. Whatever the type of illness metaphor is – Iago’s infectious words poured into Othello’s ears, or Macbeth’s Scotland that needs “rhubarb, cyme [senna] or what purgative drugs” (5.3.55-6) – these characters are recognized as patients subject infection from outside causes such as Iago’s motiveless malice or the weird sisters’ equivocal prediction. Hence, we can acknowledge the autonomy of characters in the tragedies even if they are influenced by disease eventually. In short, the location of responsibility seems to be visible: Othello would not murder Desdemona if it were not for Iago, and Macbeth and Lady Macbeth would not assassinate King Duncan if it had not been for the weird sisters. On the other hand, in the late plays, particularly in The Winter’s Tale, the capability of reading characters as disease or medicine itself becomes more prominent. Instead of any definitive explanation of his inner humor, the play demonstrates Leontes’s jealousy suddenly provoked by facing Hermionie’s friendliness toward Polixenes as if Leontes himself is a personification of a virulent drug. As McGrail points out in a discussion of the characterization of Leontes in Tyranny in Shakespeare (2002), nobody triggers Leontes’s tyrannical attitude toward his wife since neither “nature” nor “historical circumstance” explains his tyranny; Leontes himself is the source of destruction or disease (McGrail 110).

Turning back to Macbeth’s wish to purge Scotland with a variety of drugs, we could assume that the usurper of Scotland answers nothing but the particular name of medicine such as Rhubarb or cyme to the question: what cures? As opposed to that negative answer in the tragedies, The Winter’s Tale provides us with particular characters like Mamillius or Camillo who function as an influential medicine, and thus the question is: who cures? The late plays reveal a sort of correspondence between disease and medicine: As medicine stays long in a stomach and continues to heal the human body for a while, Camillo and Paulina as curative agents have patiently healed Leontes as the source of disease.

In this section I have analyzed Camillo and Paulina as personified medicine skillfully
deployed by Shakespeare. Camillo continues to live like a medicine left in the stomach of human beings in a metaphorical sense, and gradually comes into effect by supporting Polixenes and arranging the marriage of Florizel and Perdita. In the case of Paulina, working as a woman with “medicinal words,” is it notable that the importance of magic is restored as Leontes says “O royal piece! / There’s magic in thy majesty, which has / My evils conjured to remembrance” (5.3.38–40). This is the moment of redemption to witchcraft, which has been indirectly cursed in the first half of the play. Finally, as the King admits that “If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating” (110–11), thus legally permitting Paulina to practice witchcraft (Orgel 59).

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the complex imagery of illness and cure evoked in Leontes’s obsessive focus on physicality, and in other characters’ roles in Shakespeare’s The Winter’s Tale. Section 1 and 2 have focused on Leontes’s madness intertwined with medical and witchcraft discourses with contemporary publications: Lemnius’s The Touchstone of Complexions (1576), Thayre’s A Treatise of the Pestilence (1603), Ferrand’s Erotomania (1640) James’s Daemonology (1597), Perkins’s A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft (1610), Scot’s The Discoverie of Witches (1584), and Shakespeare’s Macbeth (1606). In addition to these materials regarding medical discourses to supernatural discourses, I have used Shakespeare’s Othello, Macbeth, The Merchant of Venice, and King Lear as cross-referential materials for The Winter’s Tale.

Section 3 reveals the crucial aspect of cure in The Winter’s Tale by paying attention to Camillo and Paulina, and states that these two characters work as the personified curative agents. Therefore, the word “infect” operates in a variety of usage in the play. It becomes the trigger of hallucination, adultery and filthy air, whether medically or supernaturally in the Shakespearean context. Besides, it is revealed that The Winter’s Tale is distinguished from Macbeth or Othello in that it supplies us with the unique personification of curable medicine in the figure of some particular characters including Camillo and Paulina. The process of telling the would-be fairy tale becomes the process of retelling dark fantasy with Shakespeare’s elaborate skill to combine reality with fiction, spirits with physic, medicine with witchcraft, and disease with cure. The creation of The Winter’s Tale thus becomes unexpectedly complex, expanding the dramatist’s words and imagination.
Snyder and Curren-Aquino report that Mandy Patinkin’s Leontes performed this action “with considerable roughness.” (93)

Addressing the cure for the disease, Thayre frequently repeats words such as “infection,” “venomous,” and “poison.”

Citing William Clowe’s material published in 1596, Harris also argues that by 1601 almost all of the physicians were convinced that people were infected with syphilis not because of imbalanced humours but because of infectious diseases. It is still questionable how much Shakespeare knew about such discourse, but it can be said at least that the word “infection” had a wide range of meanings for early modern citizens: (1) imbalanced humours (2) miasmatic contagion (3) decisive virus invasion.

Picher also notes that the name of Mamillius “calls attention to the boy’s dependency on his mother (Latin mamillia, female breast)” (140) and this may also suggest how the play predicts the issue of breast-feeding will be significant in later scenes such as 2.1.57–8.

If something can be added to the medical topics of nostrils and heated brain discussed above, the phrase “I’f’cks” (1.2.119) may be another point to discuss for its subtle sound effect in the context of Leones’s hallucination. While the editors of the Oxford and Cambridge editions retain the plain explanation of the word’s meaning and the inflection of spelling as they suggest “I’f’cks” to be “in faith” as a mild oath (Orgel 110), the editor of the Arden Shakespeare 3rd version notes the possible connotation of adultery regarding “I’f’cks.” According to John Pitcher, the editor, the phrase may imply the way in which Leontes feels anxiety because of its close sound to the phrase “he [Polixenes] fucks [Hermione]” (Picher 160). Although the Arden Shakespeare goes further than the other editions, it seems to ignore another possibility that could be more plausible as for the sound. Focusing on the medical discourses discussed so far, I will suggest that “I’f’cks” also sounds similar to “infect.” If the phrase sounds so actually, it may be difficult to take this sound to be meaningless because the fear of infection through the nose can be one of important elements in this scene. “In faith” as the meaning itself is thought to be mild, whereas the pronunciation, which sounds like “infect,” are able to imply what makes the main characters of the play be in depths of misery by way of Leontes’s unexpected and unfathomable madness. By the way, listing the first use of the word form as the one in Ben Jonson’s The Alchemist in 1612, OED obviously failed to record the first use of “I’f’cks” in The Winter’s Tale by Shakespeare due to the later publication of Shakespeare’s first folio in 1623.

Drakakis refers to John Stow’s The Annals or a General Chronicle of England from Brutus until the Present Year of Christ (1615) (264).

Halio refers to Horace Howard Furness, ed., The Merchant of Venice, A New Variorum Edition (Philadelphia, 1888), and George Lyman Kittredge’s Works, revised by Irving Ridner (Boston, 1792).
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